Letter from Taizé

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Taizé
YOUNG ADULT EUROPEAN MEETING
Milan
28 December '98/99 - 1 January

THE YOUNG ADULT EUROPEAN MEETING IN MILAN

Wonderful Discoveries to Be Made

The announcement that the next European meeting will take place in the capital of Lombardy was made simultaneously by Cardinal Martini, the archbishop of Milan, and Brother Roger on Saturday 4 April.

That evening, Cardinal Martini said to thousands of young Milanese: "We would like the creed, our profession of faith, lived out in the presence of the Risen Christ, Son of God, encouraged by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the communion of the universal Church, to be a proposition for life that is joyful and attractive for all. We would like to give a extensive witness to this, and we shall do so with all our hearts together with tens of thousands of young adults, during the next European meeting of Taizé, which will be held in Milan on the final days of this year and at the beginning of next year, following last year's meeting in Vienna. We shall be welcoming young people from across the world, and with them we shall pray and meditate in the simple style of Taizé, to say that the Risen Christ is in our midst, to have an experience of Church, to invoke the power of the Holy Spirit."

The meeting will take place from 28 December 1998 to 1 January 1999. For five days of prayer, sharing and reflection, young people will be welcomed into the families and parishes of the city and its surroundings.

Wonderful discoveries will be made by sharing the life of the people of Milan. During the Easter meetings in Taizé, more than 150 young adults were present from forty-three parishes of Milan and the surrounding area. They already began to think about preparations for the meeting. In listening to them, young people from other countries were astonished to see to what extent the parishes in that city provide a host of activities and services, and offer the young responsibilities and groups adapted to their searching.

In Milan, actions in favour of solidarity and mutual support are not lacking. There is also a great effort on a diocesan level to help one another grow in faith and in understanding the Bible. Once a month, the cardinal leads a "School of the Word" for thousands of young people and adults who gather in the cathedral, a time of prayer and meditation on a

specific topic. This meditation is broadcast by radio for those who were unable to come to the cathedral, and similar meetings are offered in different parts of the diocese.

"Many people know where the football stadium in Milan is," said Stefano, "but not many know that once a year that huge stadium is filled not with football fans but with those receiving confirmation and their friends, for a prayer vigil and a celebration. We also have a meeting of group leaders that brings together 7000 young people for a weekend; they are offered hospitality in parishes."

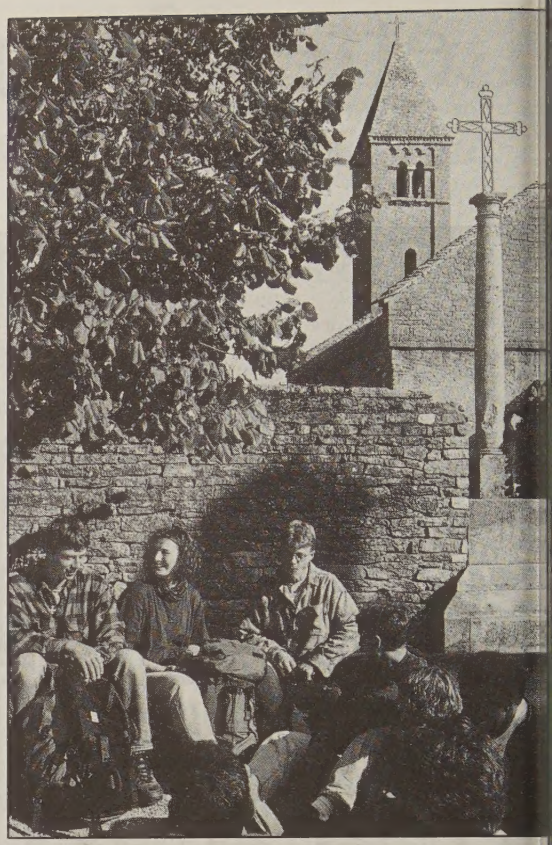
Preparations for the European meeting, which began just after Easter, are being undertaken in close collaboration with the parishes. Young people from the region of Milan have always come in great numbers to the meetings in Taizé and to the European meetings. These many contacts will enable us to live intensely during the coming months. Many people are looking for new ways to contact and to inform families, so that many families will offer hospitality to participants in the meeting.

The city of Milan is at the heart of a large metropolitan area which extends to the Swiss border. More than 400 parishes are accessible by public transporation, and they will coordinate the welcome of pilgrims in families and parish halls. Many parish priests are familiar with the spirit of the meetings in Taizé, in part because Cardinal Martini came himself to Taizé, in 1992, on a pilgrimage with the 150 youngest priests of his diocese.

THE DEATH OF BROTHER PIERRE

On April 16th, Brother Pierre died in Niamey (Niger), at the age of 77. The funeral was celebrated in the Cathedral of Niamey by Bishop Romano of Niger.

Pierre Souvairan was born in 1921 in Switzerland. He studied at the Polytechnic Institute of Zurich. In 1942, he was the first brother to join Brother Roger, who had come to Taizé two years earlier, in 1940, to begin the community. Since 1967 he lived in Africa, working with the Catholic Mission of Niger.



Milan: The City of Saint Ambrose

"Begin the work of peace with yourself, so that once you have found peace you can bring peace to others."

This appeal by Saint Ambrose, one of the first bishops of Milan, active in the fourth century (about 334-397), is still relevant! And the Church of Milan is fully aware that it carries on the heritage of that bishop who, among other things, renewed the liturgy.

The following text, drawn from a collection of texts by Christians of the first centuries prepared by brothers of Taizé, shows one aspect of Saint Ambrose's thought:

"The creation of the world is completely finished when the human being is present, who bears within himself power over all the living creatures, who recapitulates the universe in his body and reflects the beauty of all creation. Let us then find rest, just as God "rested after all the work he had done" (Gen 2,2). He rested within the human being, in his spirit and in his will. For he had created the human being endowed with intelligence and made according to his image, a being who seeks what is good, heading towards the free gifts of God's love. (...)

"I thank the Lord, our God, who created such a being in which he could rest. He created the heavens, but I do not read that he rested there. He created the earth, but I do not read that he rested there. He created the sun and the moon and the stars; I do not read that he rested there either. But I read that he created the human being and rested there, because in him he had a creature whose sins he could forgive." (Hexameron 6,75)

Ambrose was born in Trier. His father, who directed the Roman prefecture for Gaul, died when he was young. His mother came to live in Rome with her three children. There Ambrose undertook classical and legal studies. When he was thirty he became prefect in Milan, at that time the capital of the empire. When the bishop died, to his surprise Ambrose was prevailed upon to succeed him, even though he was still preparing to be baptized. Through his knowledge of Greek Christian thought, he helped open the Latin world to the riches of the Eastern Church. He wanted to foster participation by all the faithful in the liturgy. For this reason he introduced the singing of the psalms, already practiced in the East, and he wrote hymns.

YOUNG ADULT MEETINGS IN TAIZÉ

An Openness as Wide as the World

How can each person be welcomed better, when we realize how different their expectations are, and how happy each one is to see that they find their place as a unique person and not just as a member of a group? Those who return to Taizé for a second or third time generally have a clearer idea of what they are searching for and what they can find there. Those who are discovering everything for the first time need more time to understand that the most important thing will be their own openness, their desire to let God into their lives and to begin a relationship with other people they do not know yet.

Very quickly, after just a few days, many people mention how much they feel at home, even though the context is unfamiliar and the comfort level very low. Knowing that they are accepted just as they are, without needing to play a role or to justify themselves, gives each person the freedom and the support to dare to take part in the demanding adventure of prayer. What can we do so that everyone, even when there are more than 5000 people present, finds a welcoming space for prayer? To make this welcome in the church possible, as well as to help with many other practical tasks, young people offer their services for several weeks and take on the necessary responsibilities. In addition, some practical changes have helped to ameliorate the space which is used not only for worship, but also for up to seven different Bible introductions at the same time!

Trying to offer a better welcome means also improving the structures, the roads, the car parks, but especially the places where people sleep. Before the summer, new dormitories will be finished, offering accommodation to 300 more persons.

More than at other seasons, summer is the time when Taizé opens to welcome the world. As in previous years, many groups will come this summer, not just from across Euope but also from other continents.

DIFFERENT WAYS OF SPENDING THE WEEK

The meetings last a week, from one Sunday to the next. When a young person arrives in Taizé, he or she can choose among different ways of spending the week:

The group on the "sources of faith" helps participants to get acquainted with Bible texts, to relate them to their lives, to discover through them who Christ is and how he is still with us today. The Biblical topics developed complement the discoveries made during the times of prayer. This week helps people to become more rooted so that they can continue a reflection on the essential when they return home.

For those who wish, the "Bible group" offers a possibility to read basic texts of the Bible and study them in greater depth, in order to broaden one's understanding of faith and Christian life. In this group, normally there are special small groups for young adults over 25, enabling them to reflect on questions that come up when they enter the working world or begin their life as a couple.

Workshops led by brothers of the community deal with selected topics such as "How can we live out the meaning of our baptism?"; "How does God speak to us? How should we read the Bible?"; "Happy the poor; happy those who mourn... what do these words of Christ mean?"; "Responding to Christ by a yes for our whole life"; "The Spirit prays in us: deepening this dimension of Christian prayer"; "How can we remain attentive to justice and solidarity in professional life?"

Many young people are happy to spend a week in silence alone with God, sustained by the times of prayer together and the possibility of speaking personally with a brother or a sister. Those who choose silence stay and take their meals apart from the others.

Those who play a musical instrument and bring it with them can take part in a workshop on "How to use instruments to support singing in our prayer groups and parishes?" Some of the musicians will be invited to accompany the singing in the church on Saturday and Sunday (only wind instruments, cello, classical guitar: a very high level of proficiency is necessary to play in the church). From 28 June to 5 July 1998, a new CD will be taped with songs in English.

Those who have already come to Taizé can help out by spending several weeks in Taizé during the summer. In this case, they are offered a special programme, and given responsibilities to welcome others. They can be welcomed free of charge if necessary beginning on the second or third week. They should write ahead for information.

For other information, write to:
Welcome, Taizé Community, 71250 Taizé, France.
Tel (33) 385 50 30 02 (from 10 am to 12 noon and from 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm French time)
if urgent (33) 385 50 30 30
fax (33) 385 50 30 16.
Email: meetings@taize.fr
Web page: http://www.taize.fr

Two Questions Concerning Creation

If everything God created is good, why is there death?

The presence of death in creation, above all the death of human beings, is so hard to accept that the Book of Wisdom affirms: "God did not make death" (Wis 1,13). Standing in front of the tomb of his friend Lazarus, Jesus was distressed and wept (John 11,33-35). Paul sees death as a monster with a dangerous sting (1 Cor 15,55); it refuses to be tamed.

For centuries, people found a plausible solution to this problem in the first pages of the Bible. Adam and Eve, destined for a life of communion with God, sinned and, because of their sin, death entered the world. Today this story still speaks to us about trust as the source of life, about mistrust and suspicion leading to a break with God and to division among human beings. But we no longer find in it the answer to the question "Why are we mortal?" For we have become aware that the human adventure is rooted in the history of all living beings; it is a branch of this larger tree. The first human beings we can imagine were subject to biological death just like us. Faith is not called to refute the results of scientific research.

The apostles and witnesses to the risen Christ found an answer to the riddle of death in him. They affirmed that nothing in creation is comprehensible outside of Christ. Saint Paul calls him "the firstborn of all creation" (Col 1,15) and Saint John writes that "without him, nothing came into being" (John 1,3). God took his Son, who was with him from all eternity, as the plan for his work. All the beauty of creation reflects his image, and all that is incomprehensible and enigmatic finds meaning in him.

God would never have created humanity without considering from all eternity what Jesus would one day be. On Rublev's icon of the Trinity, the Father looks at his Son at the same time as at the cup with the lamb in it. From the beginning, he saw him sharing the human condition to the point of death. And he saw him rise from the dead and become "the firstborn from among the dead" (Col 1,18; Rev 1,5). Humanity was created for life and resurrection. There is no other answer to the evil of death than the Easter mystery. The joy of Easter purifies the beauty of the world of its taint of sadness and melancholy, so that Saint Francis of Assisi could include in his canticle of creatures a verse about "our sister, bodily death." To Martha, the sister of his friend Lazarus who had just died, Jesus said, "I am the resurrection. Whoever believes in me, even if they die, will live, and whoever is alive and believes in me will never die" (John 11,25-26).

What difference does it make to believe that God created the universe?

When people had only the meagre chronological indications found in the Bible, they thought the world began five or six thousand years before our era. Today, the age of the universe is estimated at fifteen hundred million years, and that of the earth at a bit less than five hundred million. Life appeared over three hundred million years ago, and the human adventure began two or three million years ago. These discoveries have pushed back the beginning to an unimaginably remote past. But in addition, they teach us not to confuse creation with the beginnings of the universe. For if God created the firmament as well as human beings, that is a process that extends throughout the entire fifteen-hundred-million-year period the universe has been in existence.

Looked at more closely, the Bible too does not situate God's creative activity in a remote past. God is "the Creator of heaven and earth" and he has never stopped being this. "Tirelessly," God is always at work (Isa 40,28). The Hebrew expression translated by "creator" is a verbal form of indeterminate tense. God created from the beginning, but God is also the one who, here and now, "sends out his breath and beings are created" (Ps 104,30). The Creator, an everlasting God, always remains the same, present for each of his creatures, ready to come to their aid. "He calls all the stars by name" (Isa 40,26) and "he gives breath to the inhabitants of the earth" (Isa 42,5).

From its first appearance, faith in the Creator freed believers from fear. It expressed their trust in existence: earthquakes will never succeed in causing the earth to topple, for God has set it on firm foundations; no flood will wipe out all life, for God has set a limit to destructive waters (Ps 104,5-9). God keeps the most fragile creatures, human beings and animals, from "returning to the dust" (Ps 104,29-30). In our day, other phenomena like the possibility of an ecological catastrophe or a collision with a huge meteorite can awaken fears. Faith in a creator God keeps such fears from paralyzing us.

Creation is God's constant triumph over the forces of destruction and death (Ps 74,12-17). The Creator saves everything that exists from the absurdity of nothingness. Creation is pulled out of the "darkness over the deep" (Gen 1,2). But so that no one draws the conclusion that everything began with chaos and darkness, the Bible affirms that "In the beginning, God created..." (Gen 1,1). No, in the beginning there was not chaos; in the beginning is God.

MEDITATING ON THE WORD
JULY

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

Rm 12:14-18,21

1 Wed Do not repay evil with ...l. Seek to do what is regarded as ...od by all. If it is possible, as far ...t depends on you, live at peace ...h everyone.

Mt 12:1-8

2 Thu Jesus said: It is mercy ...t pleases me, not sacrifice.

Jn 20:24-29

3 Fri St THOMAS
...sen from the dead, Jesus said to ...omas who doubted, "Put your ...ger here and see my hands. ...each out your hand and put it in ...y side. Do not doubt but believe." ...homas answered him, "My Lord ...d my God!"

Mk 2:15-17

4 Sat Jesus said: It is not the ...ealthy who need a doctor but the ...ck. I have not come to call the ...ighteous, but sinners.

Lk 10:1-9

5 SUN Jesus said: The har...st is plentiful but the workers are ...w. So pray that the Lord of the ...arvest may send out workers into ...s harvest.

Is 26:7-9

6 Mon My soul longs for you ... the night, Lord, and deep within ...e, my spirit seeks you.

Mt 16:13-20

7 Tue Jesus asked his dis...ples: "Who do people say I am?" ...Some say John the Baptist," they ...nswered, "some Elijah, and ...thers Jeremiah or one of the ...rophets." "But you," he said, "who ...o you say I am?" Peter spoke up ...nd said, "You are the Christ, the ...on of the living God."

Is 40:29-31

8 Wed Those who hope in ...God shall renew their strength. ...They shall run and not grow weary, ...they shall walk and not be tired.

Jn 21:15-17

9 Thu Jesus asked Peter, ...Do you love me?" Peter replied, ...Lord, you know everything; you ...know I love you."

Ph 2:1-11

10 Fri St. Paul writes: Be of ...the same mind, having the same ...love, being one in spirit and pur...pose. Do nothing from selfish am...bition. Your attitude should be the ...same as that of Christ Jesus him...self.

Is 42:1-4

11 Sat The Lord says: My ser...vant does not cry out or raise his ...voice. Faithfully he will present ...what is just; he will not falter or be ...discouraged until he has estab...lished justice on the earth.

Lk 10:25-37

12 SUN Having told the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus asked the teacher of the law, "Who showed themselves to be a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" He replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Is 41:8-10

13 Mon The Lord says to his people: You are my servant, I have chosen you and will not cast you off. Fear not, for I am with you.

Mk 1:16-20

14 Tue Jesus said to his first disciples, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of people." And at once they left their nets and followed him.

Ep 2:13-18

15 Wed Christ is our peace. He has broken down the dividing wall of hostility between the peoples and reconciled them to God, through the cross.

1 Co 4:1-5

16 Thu Paul writes: Judge nothing prematurely, but wait until the Lord comes.

Lk 6:20-23

17 Fri Looking at his disciples, Jesus said: Happy are you who are poor, the kingdom of God is yours.

2 Co 4:5-7

18 Sat We do not proclaim ourselves, but Christ Jesus, the Lord. We are your servants for Jesus' sake.

Lk 10:38-42

19 SUN Jesus said to Martha: You are worried and upset about many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one.

Ph 1:1-11

20 Mon Paul writes: I pray that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best.

2 Co 1:3-7

21 Tue Blessed be God who consoles us in all our afflictions. For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ.

Rm 8:18-25

22 Wed Paul writes: The whole of creation has been groaning as in childbirth up to the present time. And we too groan inwardly as we wait with eagerness for our bodies to be set free.

Mt 5:38-42

23 Thu Jesus said: Give to anyone who asks you, and if anyone wants to borrow, do not turn away.

Ps 147

24 Fri Give praise to the Lord! It is good to sing praises to the one who heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds.

Mt 20:24-28

25 Sat St JAMES
Jesus said: The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life for the forgiveness of many.

Lk 11:9-13

26 SUN Jesus said: Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.

Rm 15:7-13

27 Mon Accept one another just as Christ accepted you, for the glory of God.

Jr 17:7-8

28 Tue Blessed are they who put their trust in the Lord. Such a person is like a tree planted by the water: in a year of drought it is untroubled and never ceases to bear fruit.

Mt 5:17-37

29 Wed Jesus said: If you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with them first, and then come back and present your offering.

2 Co 5:13-17

30 Thu Christ died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for the one who died and was raised to life for them.

Mk 12:41-44

31 Fri Jesus saw a poor widow put two small coins into the temple treasury and, calling his disciples, he said, "In truth I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all the others, for they all gave out of their wealth, but she has put in everything she possessed."

JOHANNINE HOURS

2 CORINTHIANS 1,3-11

The apostle Paul is convinced that the paschal mystery, the journey through suffering and death to reach the fullness of life, is not a reality that belongs only to the past. What Jesus experienced in Palestine remains present in the daily life of each believer. The cross and the resurrection are not only the *means* by which Christ saved us; they are that salvation itself as it transforms our life from within.

In this text, Paul speaks of the sharing in this mystery of death and life which unites him to Christ and to the faithful of Corinth. He does this by means of two words. First *thlipsis*, usually translated by "hardship" or "tribulation," but referring more exactly to the difficulties encountered by believers in a world which cannot understand their choices and their priorities, troubles that are part of the road to a different future (cf. Acts 14,22). The other word is *parakaleô* and its derivatives; translated here by "comfort," it stands for the gift of inner strength that is nothing other than the presence of the Holy Spirit, the principal "Paraclete" (cf. John 14,16). This inner presence which encourages, supports and vivifies is the fruit of the resurrection already at work in our lives.

Paul celebrates in these verses the mysterious dialectic of affliction and comfort that links the disciples to Christ and among themselves. The apostle underwent a kind of death and resurrection similar to Christ's (v.5). That experience, which strengthened his trust in God, the Source of comfort, will benefit the community to which he feels connected. One person's difficulties and the way he or she deals with them can encourage others. In the same way, one person's courage can help others who are at grips with discouragement. A similar communion exists in prayer, by the link between asking and giving thanks (v.11). Christ's death and resurrection thus remain a living reality down through the ages.

- What experiences of "hardship" have marked my life? Where did my "comfort" come from?
- How can we be "paracletes" for others, in other words a presence that supports and encourages?
- How does this text help me understand the two aspects of prayer, asking and giving thanks?

MEDITATING ON THE WORD

AUGUST

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

Mt 4:12-17

1 Sat Jesus said: Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand.

Col 3:1-5

2 SUN Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

Jr 14:8-9

3 Mon You are our hope, O God. You are among us and we are called by your name.

Ga 5:16-18,22-23

4 Tue Let yourselves be guided by the Spirit and you will not be under the Law. For the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, gentleness, trust in others and self-control.

Mt 5:1-12

5 Wed Jesus said: Happy are the clear in heart, for they shall see God.

2 P 1:19-21

6 Thu TRANSFIGURATION You do well to pay attention to the word of the prophets, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Mt 5:38-48

7 Fri Jesus said: Love your enemies and pray for those who mistreat you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.

2 Co 1:8-11

8 Sat Paul writes: When overburdened to the point of despair, we learnt to rely, not on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead to life.

Lk 12:32-34

9 SUN Jesus said: Give to those in need. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure that will not fail, in heaven where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Ws 1:1-3

10 Mon Seek God in simplicity of heart; for the Lord reveals himself to those who do not refuse him their trust.

Jn 12:20-30

11 Tue Jesus said: In truth, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies it remains only a single grain. But if it dies, it yields a big harvest.

Mt 11:28-30

12 Wed Jesus said: Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

1 Co 13:1-13

13 Thu Love is patient and kind. Love does not seek its own advantage, it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but finds its joy in the truth.

Heb 2:5-18

14 Fri Because Christ himself suffered when he was put to the test, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Lk 1:39-45

15 Sat THE VIRGIN MARY Elizabeth said to Mary: Blessed is she who believed that the promise the Lord made her would be fulfilled.

Heb 12:1-2

16 SUN Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, to run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection.

Pr 4:23

17 Mon Above all else, watch over your heart, for it is the well-spring of life.

Jr 31:31-34

18 Tue The Lord says: I shall put my law deep within them, I shall write it on their hearts. I shall be their God and they will be my people.

Jm 1:12-15

19 Wed James writes: Let no one say when they are tempted, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone.

Jn 15:1-8

20 Thu Jesus said: I am the true vine. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit unless it remains part of the vine, neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

1 Jn 2:3-11

21 Fri Whoever loves their brother or sister lives in the light and need not be afraid of stumbling.

Jn 15:9-17

22 Sat Jesus said: You did not choose me. No, I chose you, and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit.

Is 66:18

23 SUN The Lord says: I am coming to gather the people of every nation and language, and they will see my glory.

Mk 4:26-29

24 Mon Jesus said: The kingdom of God is like this: A person scatters seed on the land. Night and day, whether they are awake or asleep, the seed sprouts and grows, they know not how.

1 P 5:6-11

25 Tue Peter writes: Cast all your anxiety on God, because God cares for you.

Rv 21:5-7

26 Wed God says: I am the Beginning and the End. I shall give water from the well of life freely to anyone who is thirsty.

1 Jn 1:1-7

27 Thu This is what we have heard from Christ: God is light, in him there is no darkness at all.

Ep 4:25-32

28 Fri Forgive one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

1 Co 1:4-9

29 Sat God is faithful and has called you to live in communion with his Son, Jesus Christ.

Lk 14:1-14

30 SUN Jesus said: When you have a dinner, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind, and you will be blessed, for they have no means to repay you.

2 Co 12:1-10

31 Mon Paul writes: God said to me: My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

JOHANNINE HOUR

PSALM 12

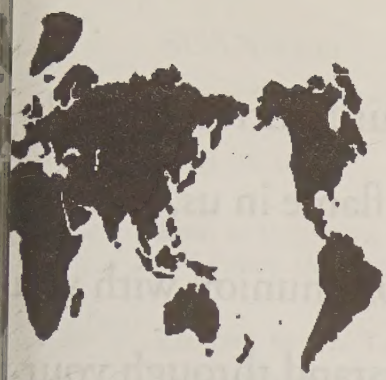
Biblical faith constantly sets us on the road, rooted as it is in the memory of a God who liberated his people from slavery and led them toward a land of happiness. This perspective gives its full significance to the pilgrimages that brought the faithful three times each year to the great Temple in Jerusalem, the spiritual centre of the holy nation.

The very fact of setting out on this journey is a source of joy for believers (v.1); the goal of the pilgrimage is thus already in some sense present on the road which leads to it. Similarly, Jerusalem is not interesting for itself alone, but because it is the symbol--and the source--of the people's unity. From there "judgment" radiates outward, in other words God's will to have the rights of the weakest be respected, to create a society where harmony reigns. The kings of "the house of David" have the mission of watching over this new order which God desires (v.3-5). The psalm concludes with a prayer for the peace and security of the holy city, which guarantees the happiness of the entire nation.

Read from a Christian viewpoint, this psalm recapitulates the different stages of the history of salvation. First there is the long road to fulfillment, a centuries-long expectation which creates communion and already gives a foretaste of the joy to come (cf. Heb 11,13). Then at the centre Christ, Son of David and Son of God, source of a universal reconciliation "in one body" (Eph 2,16). From there the fullness of Life (*shalom*, "peace") radiates outward for all humanity (Eph 2,17; Luke 24,47). The fate of the City and that of the human family are one; the "Christ of communion," present in his Church, is the seed of a reconciled world.

- What helps me to remember that faith in God and Christ is not a static reality but the source of an inner pilgrimage? From what can I liberate myself in order to undertake this pilgrimage as freely and joyfully as possible?

- What can we do, beginning with ourselves, so that our Christian communities may be seen as places of unity and understanding where everyone feels at home?



Echoes from the Continents

India

A Meeting in Bihar

After the meetings of Karnataka and the North-East, the third meeting of the "Pilgrimage of Trust on Earth" for 97 in India took place from the 16th to th September.

Young adults from the twelve ioceses of Bihar met together at Ranwi, where a meeting the previous year d gathered the young people of the wn. Some of them came from further ield, such as the three young people om Bangladesh. Thanks to the experiace of the year before, the participants om other towns saw the good organizion and coherence of the preparation am. Some young people had put in a reat deal of work in getting ready a hall r the prayer. That was not easy in the iddle of the rainy season, but it was orth the effort. One of the young eople from Hazaribagh said that beorehand he had not been attracted by rayer, and he was thinking of going ack home, but after seeing the beauty f the place he had decided to stay, and hat that transformed something in his fe.

The times of reflection on biblical exts were essential. Several people said hat the reading of the Bible, and also he letter of Brother Roger translated nto Hindi, helped them to realise that he Bible was really written for them.

Some of the participants had been to aizé, in the years before. They explained how, in their professional work or example, their commitment had been efreshed by this experience. One afternoon, the groups visited a hospital of he Reformed Church, a Lutheran centre for the blind, and a house of the missionary sisters of Mother Teresa. The meeting was also marked by the painful events of this period: the death of Mother Teresa and the violence of which Christians had been the victims in several parts of India.

Spain

With Immigrants

"We are continuing our work," writes Anna from Valencia, "with those who suffer the most, especially illegal immigrants. Each day we see the tragedy of their situation grow and we are overwhelmed by all their needs. It is like a 'fourth world' that is developping here in Europe. We do this work with the group that meets for prayer every Saturday evening. This prayer and the fellowship that unites us give us the strength always to be ready to give what we are and what we have, especially for those who are most in need. Some of us have decided not to save any money and they give what they can at the end of each month. In the face of such generosity in time and resources, all we can do is to thank God, and we rejoice at the road we have been following for several years now, ever since our stay in Taizé."

Australia

A Meeting at the Home of the Aboriginal Australians

"We need to be close to God and to spend time with him. This was the purpose of the weekend on the theme of simplicity which took place at Perth in Western Australia in January 1998," writes Catherine, a high school student of 17.

"The weekend was open to everyone," she continues, "with big differences between us; but very quickly a strong sense of comunity brought us together, especially because of the common prayers three times a day. In spite of the great differences of age and background, everyone was on the same level, just as we are all equal before God. Sharing our faith with others became easy.

"We read Brother Roger's Letter *Joy Untold*, which gave us hope for the future, a hope which 'reinvents the world' and which has its source in God. We also shared about the important questions of our daily life. The last evening we had a long prayer around the cross in the cathedral, and we were joined by a lot of young people from the region around Perth. For me, it was the discovery of a very simple prayer which helps me really open myself to God."

Opening Ways of Trust

Another group of young adults met in South Australia on the *Australia Day* weekend, a time when European Australians celebrate the discovery and settlement of Australia but when indigenous Australians recall the huge cost to their people and culture of that same event. During the prayer around the cross one evening, we were able to remember these events and to individually ask forgiveness for past and present violations of trust.

Hospitality was provided by the Ngarranjeri people on their land at Camp Coorong, a centre which exists to offer education and cultural sharing. As is becoming a custom at gatherings in Australia generally, this group was welcomed onto the land by aboriginal

North Korea

A Shipment of Grain

During the young adult European meeting in Vienna, Brother Roger announced that Operation Hope would sponsor a shipment of maize to North Korea. For the last three year, the inhabitants of that Far Eastern country have been suffering from a great lack of food caused by natural catastrophes, floods and drought. Repairing the damage will take much time. Millions of people are suffering and children are the most endangered.

In February, the maize sent by Taizé was distributed in seven regions of three provinces: North Pyongan: Hyangsan (110 tons), Kujang (118), Yomju (100); South Pyongan: Pyongsong (170), Taedong (100); North Hwanghae: Unpa (100), Songrim (180). A brother of the Taizé Community was present to help with the distribution.

Since the situation is still critical, Operation Hope will fund another shipment of maize according to its possibilities, with support coming primarily from adults and not from the young, who find it more and more difficult to help financially. People can take part in this aid by sending contributions to Operation Hope.

leaders. What an opportunity in this atmosphere of offered friendship, to share the space, the silence, to pray, to listen and to explore ways of trusting. It was moving to listen to people telling aboriginal stories which had such similarities to Gospel stories.

Netherlands

Communicating Hope

From March 20 to 22, under a leaden sky from which rain was pouring down, some five hundred young people from all the provinces of the Netherlands came together for a regional meeting in Leeuwarden, the capital of Friesland, in the north of the country. The warmth of the welcome in families made them quickly forget the inclement weather. Times of prayer, Bible reflection and workshops provided the rhythm of the meeting. For the closing prayer, a thousand additional persons joined them in the Bonifatiuskerk. The parishes of the city were associated with the meeting, since the participants stayed in families and the Saturday morning prayer was held in the parish churches. The times of prayer together gave much depth to the meeting. Different expectations could be felt in those who came, for instance the desire to create better understanding between people of different denominations and the wish to see what other young people are searching for and how they are creating hope. The meeting itself was centred on hope: how can we communicate hope to those who are close to us, starting right away in the difficult situations of our schools and neighbourhoods?

Christ Jesus,

even when your resurrection only kindles a tiny flame in us, it enable us to live in communion with you. And we understand through your Gospel that you came to earth not just for part of humanity but for every human being, even for those who are not aware of your presence in them.

PRAYER BY BROTHER ROGER OF TAIZÉ FOR EASTER 19

Taizé: A Meaning to Life

"As a young man, when I was beginning the tough process of learning what life is, I lived in a radically atheistic environment, I found myself with many questions, searching amidst anguish and wonder. I was amazed to find myself living, breathing and walking. But I was also agonized by the nothingness in which it seemed that everything was going to be engulfed. Nevertheless, I began little by little to sense a meaning in things. I came to understand that there were not only questions, there were answers too. Little by little, these revelations came together in a way that seemed to center around a face and also around a message: the face and the word of Christ. Christ is a person; he is a secret companion who gently puts his hand on our shoulder in moments of loneliness and despair. He is a person, but one who opens onto what could be called an abyss of personhood, an abyss from which liberation and love come through from him to all of us."

This is how Olivier Clment, Orthodox theologian and university professor in Paris, describes his own searching for a meaning to life. And he sees a direct link between his own experiences and what is being lived out in Taizé, a place that for him has become a "spiritual home".

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